10: d'Orleans--344 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 527, 805

"April 11th

This is a day of great rejoicing, being the celebration of the Mahason crane paï (the calendar being finished goes away), the change of year being observed here in the fifth month, instead of in the fourth as at Nan. This and the rejoicings in the twelfth month are the two most important of the fêtes held in nearly every week of the year. This fête is very similar to that of the Annamite Têt, except that here it extended over nearly a fortnight."

10: d'Orleans--344-345 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 443, 527, 556

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"We pay an early visit to the market and find the streets crowded, the women being attired in their finest things, and being loaded with bracelets and necklaces of gold, while the market itself is full of [345] birds in cages, which it is considered to be a very meritorious act to purchase and let loose. This Laos custom is very general among the Buddhists, and I remember seeing at Batang a Chinese soldier who, as he caught his fish, put them into a bucketful of water, the Thibetans giving him money at the close of the day to put them back into the river."

10: d'Orleans--345 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 231, 252, 262, 527

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"I notice also some iguanas, the flesh of which is said to be excellent, but they are so quick in their movements that they can only be caught by dogs trained to the work. Flowers, including piles of gardenias picked in the gardens, four varieties of orchid and red and white flowers from different trees, are also bought in large quantities for the decoration of the pagodas, and at the stalls set up in the open is sold vermicelli cooked with grasshoppers, a small bag made out of banana leaves answering the purpose of a cup."

10: d'Orleans--345 [3] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 527, 796

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"There is great animation in the streets, nearly all the inhabitants finding their way into the main thoroughfares, shouting, buying, discussing, eating, and smoking until the religious ceremony begins. The bonzes have brought into the open all their gods, excepting the large statue at the further end of the pagoda, and proceed to put them through their toilet. The women, in the meanwhile, are visiting the pagodas, the general rule being to go to those situated in another parish to that to which they belong. The evening is spent in shouting and singing, like the last."

10: d'Orleans--346 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 527, 782, 796, 821

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]"April 12th
As we cross the stream, we notice all along the banks tiny rafts conveying presents, notably rice, and these are offerings made by the boatmen in order that they may take plenty of fish, and be favoured by the weather while out with their boats.

In the town the statues are still out in the open, or rather they are placed under a small scaffolding, the sacred water conduit pouring out its contents drop by drop through the dragon's mouth in which it terminates at one end, while the other end is in the pagoda and is being fed by the priests, long tapers with strips of paper bearing the donor's name are burning before the altar."

10: d'Orleans--346 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 527, 796, 822

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"In the main street we encounter a cortége which is coming from Ouate Tâte to Ouate Sieng Tong, and this is supposed to be the old year which is being thus escorted. It is curious, in this connection, to note that the old year is fetched from the west, while the new year will come from the east, but I do not know whether this is due to chance or is a matter of tradition."

10: d'Orleans--346-347 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 527, 541, 796

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"The order and composition of the procession are regulated by rites of very long standing. At the head of the procession march young men with flowers in their hands, then two rows of bearers of red and white umbrellas for the temple, behind them coming six or eight men carrying upon their shoulders one of those gilt chairs which are used in the pagodas as pulpits, and upon which one of the principal bonzes is seated. He is accompanied by two guards, who have in their hands [347] a bamboo with a mat at the end of it shaped like a lotus leaf. Following him comes a cortége of bonzes and students in yellow, belonging to six pagodas, singing in chorus or making response to one another, while at an interval of about fifty yards, a number of young girls march in regular order, the smallest coming first. They all have a yellow scarf over their dress, and each has a parasol according to her size, from the tiny European sunshades to the vast Chinese umbrellas of oiled paper, and each of them carries a silver jar full of flowers for the pagodas or of water for the libations. Picturesque as this spectacle is, it is not the most curious part of this 'festival of the women ' as it might well be called."

10: d'Orleans--348 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 532, 527, 773, 796

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]
"The dances begin, and two men emerge from the pagoda enveloped in vast cloaks coming down to their heels which are meant to designate the skin of some wild animal, while they have on their heads a mask of black wood representing some monster with enormous eyes, large mouth with very sharp teeth, very long ears and a lower jaw which can be moved at will. Behind the head is a long mane of coarse hair, and we are told that they are known as Pi Konge, or devils with a cruel face, while the old bonze says that they are the chiefs of the tigers, or the Pi Sua (race of devils). The Siamese Colonel adds that in the Laos they are known as Pou Yen (from Pou, father) or Ya Yen (from Ya, mother), and there is a legend that men of this kind once lived in a large forest, and that though they inspired great terror two of them were captured, these monsters representing the captive pair. It is interesting to compare this native tradition with the assertion of several travellers that the Laos was formerly inhabited by a hairy race of men."

10: d'Orleans--351-352 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 521, 527, 534, 832

[LSS: during the Ngones ceremonies which are part of the Laotian New Year celebration.] "Facing the girls were seated one or two groups of young men playing upon the guitar, the tam-tam and a sort of Laotian organ made of bamboo. Several of them are singing, but when they do so they put a corner of their scarf over their head so as not to be seen, while others take up the chorus. While the singing is in progress, conversation is allowed to go on between the young men and the girls, each of [352] the former taking up his place opposite the girl of his fancy. This goes on until two in the morning, being much like the flirtation of other countries, with this difference that there is no dancing and that conversation with the unmarried girls is more free than with married women."

10: d'Orleans--352 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 527, 539, 832

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]
"In one of the pagodas we visit, I can hear the prayers of the bonzes mingling with the soft whisperings of the love-stricken swain, one of whom delivers himself thus:--

'Oh! my love, you who are my very own heart, I love none but you. It is you only whom I love. You are white and green like the eggs of a crow. I implore of you to be my life.' "

10: d'Orleans--352 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 524, 527

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"There are also certain games played one of these being very much like that known to us as 'questions and answers,' while there is another played with bits of paper, which resembles that of 'mother goose.'"

10: d'Orleans--352 [3] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 527

"The same festivals are celebrated on April 13th and 14th, except that it is the eastern pagodas which bring in the new year and conduct it westward to Ouate Tâte Loung." [LSS: for a description of the king's tour of the streets on April 15, see category 116, pp. 352-355.]

10: d'Orleans--347-348 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 527, 783, 796, 823

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"Women sprinkle water over the chief bonze, and others bolder still, come and pour the contents of their jar over some young student. This custom of sprinkling or pouring water, which is also to be met with at certain festivals in Siam and Burmah, would not be so suprising if it were confined to the priests, but here the girls pick up mud and plaster the faces of the young men, whoever they may be, and our white dresses tempt them so much that we are obliged to assume a very stern look in order to keep them at a distance. The young men, however, are too gallant to resent these attentions, and as for the bonzes, they get something better than water offered them, as presents are made them in the shape of pans full of food, which are handed to two men who accompany the chair.

When the procession reaches Ouate Sieng Tong, it enters the courtyard, and the bonzes, after reciting [348] the usual prayers, enter a sort of shed surrounded by planks and having upon the top the same water conduit which has been used for sprinkling water over the gods. The women pour their water into this conduit, which flows down over the priests, who emerge from the shed purified and washed, but dripping wet, though this they do not seem to mind."

10: d'Orleans--348-351 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 171, 527, 535, 796

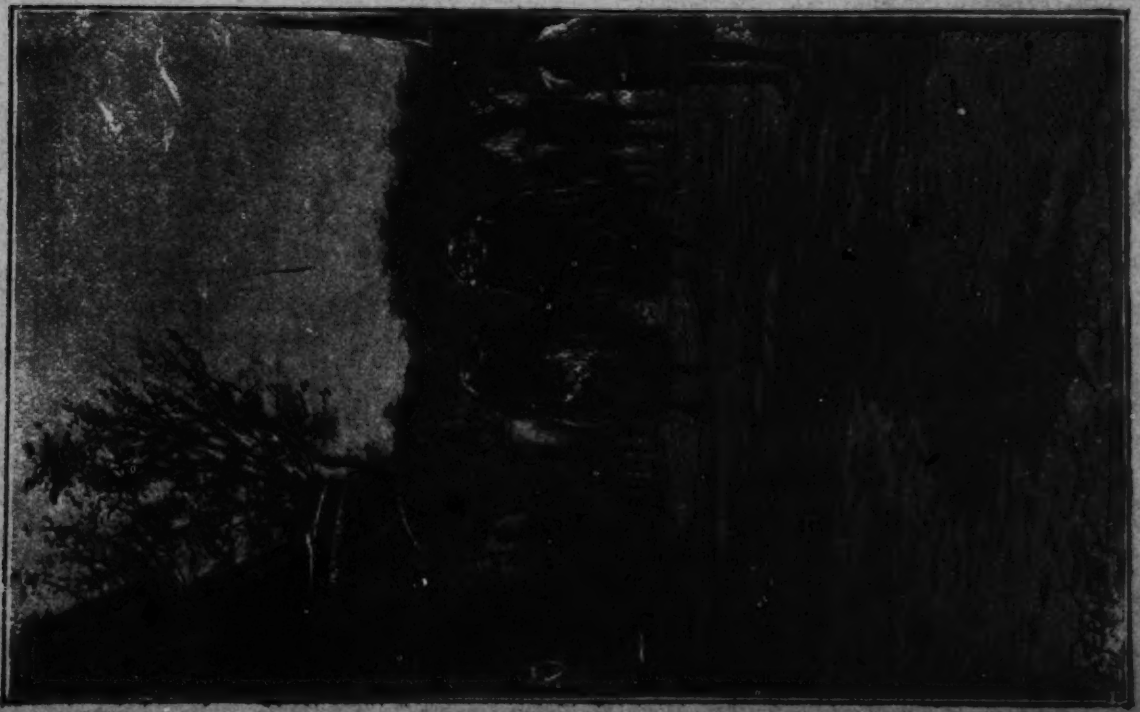
[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"Whatever be the origin of these two 'monsters,' [LSS: dancers in masks] they seem to amuse the crowd very much, and when after having knelt in front of the pagoda and wished the spectators a happy new year, they begin to dance, I am surprised beyond measure to find that it is the [pages 349 and 350 contain illustration] [351] self-same dance which I saw when travelling through Thibet with M. Bonvalot two years before. The steps and the attitudes are exactly the same, and it would be interesting to know whether this is a mere chance or due to the existence of the same traditions between peoples living so far apart. The tam-tam, which is beaten by hand, without any rhythm, is the music used as an accompaniment, and from time to time the monsters make a charge and send the crowd flying, one of them chasing a young girl round a tree. I can see only Laotians among the spectators, the Kas holding aloof. When the dances are over, the procession starts on its way back, the priests being escorted back to their several pagodas."

10: d'Orleans--349
116, 527, 535, 563

T-3 (1891-92) 1894

Laos
Ethnic subgroups



NEW YEAR DANCES AT QUATE SIENG TONG, LUANG PHABANG.

10: d'Orleans--355 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 527

"April 16th

This is a day of rest, so far as the official fêtes are concerned, but, as one of the chief bonzes puts it, 'the women are pleased, and therefore they sing.' "

23: Franck--321-322 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians-1-2
116, 644, 527, 796

"There are ceremonial occasions when the king comes to the home of the commissaire, not by Ford but on an elephant, and is carried up the steps seated on his throne, white parasols over him and a great retinue about him. The French residents condoled with me particularly because I had not reached Luang Prabang quinze jours--a fortnight--earlier. For in the Kingdom of the Divine Buddha New Year's [322] had fallen on April 12 that year, and with it comes the ceremony of the petit serment, as distinguished from the grand serment in November; that is, the swearing of fealty to the French and to the king--please note the order. Then the king rides on several elephants, I gathered, though probably only one at the time, and is carried through the town on his throne, followed by long processions of notables and mandarins in white jackets and sampots of every color of the rainbow, if not indeed several which it lacks. The common people, all the inhabitants of the capital except the Annamese and the French, kneel and bow their heads to the earth, for then they must not look upon their king, though it is said a few of the least reverent sometimes do get a glimpse à la dérobée. To judge by the pictures French residents had taken of the recent ceremony it was a sight worth coming two weeks earlier to see. In them all the inevitable cigarette was dangling from the king's lips; no ceremony is so solemn, no place so sacred, that Tiao Sisavang Vong Somdet Prah will go without his smoke. As many a photograph of the few remaining

European monarchs and their possible successors shows, he has good precedent for thus openly indulging. Perhaps it is a sign of increasing democracy, or such informal and plebeian habits may always have been shared by kings, though our expurgated histories do not mention them. Cigarette or Ford, however, the people of Luang Prabang take their king very seriously, more seriously than he does himself. The native doctor at the government hospital, educated in Hanoi and outwardly entirely French except in complexion, kneels and touches his forehead to the floor before he gives medicine to one of the king's sons in the palace nursery."

25: Brodrick--99-100 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians-1-2
116, 527, 535, 796

"...it is difficult to spend only a few days in the Laos without living a Laotian feast-day. Take the Boun Dueun Ha, that is the New Year festival, and also that of the Little Oath (of allegiance that is). The festivities are held at the beginning of April, thus at the time of year when the days are hottest and the nights most suave.

In every village there will be a procession headed by youths bearing branches of flowers. Then will come two files of men carrying the sacred umbrellas. Afterwards six or eight men bearing upon their shoulders a palanquin, in which sits the chief of the local pagoda. The monks and their acolytes holding urns full of flowers and jars filled with lustral water, bring up the rear. So far, so good, it all seems an orderly and decent religious procession.

But as the cortège advances, the women on either side of the way throw buckets of water on the processionists, while the girls pelt them with mud. When the cortège has reached the pagoda, the whole people stand round joining in the antiphonies of praise sung in honour of the Blessed One and then fall back in a circle to watch the dances.

And these dances are not at all Buddhist. There are three main performers. There is the dragon Sing, and there is the Ngo Gneu, and then there is the Pou Gneu. These two last represent 'ancestor' spirits and their impersonators wear curious masks and their bodies are covered with beasts' skins. The wooden masks are black and swathed in streaming hair which twirls as the dance moves on. Pou Gneu has a pumpkin-like

face with a huge toothy, grinning [100] mouth such as you may see in a Hallowe'en goblin. And the ancestors' ghosts come back to plague men in animal guise."

25: Brodrick--100 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 273, 527, 534, 541

"In May is the Feast of Fireworks, that begins with a decorous temple service and then, after nightfall, the big drums start to throb. All night long men hammer at the buffalo-hide tambours, breaking off only to make the rounds of the village where, at each house, they drink rice-alcohol, and so the Firework Festival goes on, with rockets whizzing in the sky and the bass drums rumbling, a holiday of drunkenness and gaiety prolonged for three whole days.

The Festival of the Great Waters, in July, is not unlike that in Cambodia, but more spontaneous and fairy-like. Then there is the Cake Feast in October and then at the Hunter's Moon, the Festival of the Great Oath.

These are some of the official court festivals in the realm of Luang-Prabang, but the local, village feasts are more revealing of the Laotian as he is. The Courts of Love, singing all night long, and the funerals..."

25: Brodrick--109 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 346, 527, 641

"The Moon City [HD: i.e. Vientane] was once a town of sanctuaries and held, they say, over eighty pagodas, but there are now only twenty-four, most of which are in ruins. The place was thoroughly sacked by the Siamese in 1827. The Sisaket pagoda has been more or less restored, and here take place twice a year the ceremonies of the Great and of the Little Oath, [HD: of allegiance] this time to the prevailing government in France and not to the Lord of the Elephants and the Umbrella. [HD: i.e. the king of Luang Prabang]"

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM 1 Indochina
Laotians AM 8

started cellular constructions in the window shutters and armies of cockroaches marched across the floors. Precious, expensive water was brought in large pots and left in the subdivision of the room where, using a gourd with a hole in its bottom, you could take a shower. The main advantage of having this open pot of water in the room was that it collected a gauzy layer of mosquitoes which were content to stay there in harmless concentration, unless disturbed. The Mekong could be seen from the window, a sallow strip of water across half a mile of whitened river-bed. Perhaps this drought had something to do with the town's electrical generating system, because only occasionally – and never at night – would the filament of the electric light bulb consent to glow feebly. Whenever the hot wind sprang up, stirring the trees round the house, great dry leaves as big as dishes came tumbling down and fell with a crash in the layer already deposited on the earth. It was the death-rattle of the year, which in Laos expires in croaking senility, to be re-born with the raging storms which were about to break.

Vientiane is a religious centre, one of the two ancient capitals of Laos. It abounds with pagodas, many of them deserted and in ruins; and colossal Buddhas, with dusty half-obliterated smiles, sit in the tumbled brickwork.

Since at this time, when the earth had dried up, there was no work to be done anywhere, it was the season of *bouns*; the Laotian festivals. Each pagoda holds one, as a means of collecting funds. They last for three days, and although an attempt is made not to hold two *bouns* at the same time, there are so many pagodas that duplication cannot always be helped; so that every night for several weeks the sky over one or more districts of Vientiane glows with the reflection of thousands of lights, while from a distance one catches the gusty, carnival sounds of Laotian rejoicings. *Bouns* start at about eleven, and go on all night.

The first night after my arrival I went to a *boun*, which I found by

1/2 late March. --
Analyst]

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

following a crowd. It was about two miles from the town's centre 527
and I passed several pagodas on the way, where carpenters were working by lamplight in preparation for a future festival.

An enclosure had been built round the pagoda in which every 354
kind of light, from hurricane lamps to fluorescent tubes, had been 527
concentrated in an anarchic glare. The pagoda had hired a generator 545
for the occasion. There was no entrance fee, but young ladies with demurely lowered eyes waited just inside to accept donations, in return for which you received a candle, a posy of Japanese lilac and two joss-sticks in a bamboo container. Among the many attractions was a free theatre show, lasting for many hours, indistinguishable, except to an expert, from the theatre of Siam. Actors remained on the stage for what seemed interminable periods, occasionally advancing or retreating a few steps. Meanwhile their babies played happily round their feet, and quite frequently a stage-hand would walk across and interrupt a scene for a few seconds to pump up the pressure in the hurricane lamps.

On a nearby platform the *lap ton* was being danced. Once again 292
it was the major attraction, but as it was still incorrect for Laotian 301
girls to dance in public, religious enterprise had arranged for 535
hostesses to be brought over from Siam, just across the river. The 562
pagoda hired the girls for the three nights and lodged them in a 527
nearby building. It cost a piastre to cavort round the stage for about fifteen minutes with one of them. They were dressed in hideous knee-length frocks, and some seemed to have permanent waves. The backward Laotian girls in their dowdy finery, their silk scarves, their skirts woven at the hem and waist-band with silver and gold thread, and their abundant jewel-decked chignons, could only look on wistfully. As I arrived the organizers were having 403
trouble with the microphone – indispensable adjunct to any social 527
occasion in the new Far East. A young man chanted a soft, nasal melody which could only be heard within the *boun* enclosure itself. But suddenly the electricians were successful with their tinkerings and all Vientiane was flooded with a great, ogrish baying. The

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
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403 electricians hugged each other, and, enchanted by the din, the
● 527 audience began to drift away from the theatre and make for the dancing floor.

527 The second attraction in order of popularity was a love-court. A
584 quadrangular arrangement of tables had been formed, covered by a
782 thatched roof raised on posts decorated with woven bamboo
793 representations of animals, weapons and phallic emblems. Seated round the tables in the interior of the square were the girls, and their suitors sat facing them. Between the couples had been placed offerings of food, brought by the girls. Originally a tribute to some ancient, forgotten fertility god, a primeval Thai Venus, the offerings would be given, next day, to the bonzes. All through the night the bantering of witticisms, the singing and the exchange of improvised verse would go on, accompanied by the accordion-like
[534] wheezings of the Kène, the Stone Age gourd pipes of Laos. Sometimes through a happy fault in the circuit the splutter and bellow of the loud-speakers would suddenly lapse, and you heard the beehive dronings of the communal love-making, the kènes, and the voice of the presiding bonze, preaching continually in an archaic, incomprehensible language from the wicker cage into which he had been fastened. The cage symbolized the protection of his religion from these earthly distractions. As soon as inspiration failed he would be relieved by the next on the rota of preachers, waiting now to take his place.

584 Love-courts are the accepted preliminary to the consummation of
[533] affairs of the heart, which — despite European conviction that
576 romantic love is a Western invention — are accompanied in Laos by much versifying and mild, self-imposed frustrations. When, for instance, a well-known beauty is wooed by a number of suitors, a serenading match may be arranged on the veranda of her house to permit her to test under competitive conditions the poetic and musical capabilities of each of them. Complete pre-marital freedom
[836] is recognized, but much outward reserve is maintained. There is a time and place for everything. It is incorrect, for example, to

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
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000 the point of respecting in a light-hearted way all the superstitions of East and West combined; sometimes perplexed when they were in conflict, as happens, for example, with Friday the 13th; since in Indo-China all odd days are fairly lucky, and Friday is the luckiest day of the week. He carried a Laotian sorcerer's stick, engraved with signs and symbols enabling him to cast a rapid horoscope, but was only affected by verdicts in support of decisions he had already taken. Dupont was in a great hurry to get back to Luang Prabang, because his wife was pregnant and he was afraid that she would hurt herself on her bicycle, although he had dismantled it and had
494 hidden some essential parts. We were supposed to stay in the convoy until the Xien Khouang embranchment was reached, about a hundred miles from Luang Prabang, but Dupont said that if I had no objection we would clear off on our own at the first possible opportunity. He then made some fatalistic remarks about death and predestination.

494 At the convoy assembly-point, we found a great show of discip-
722 line. Tight-lipped officers were walking up and down examining tyres and checking guns and ammunition. Drivers were assembled and lectured on convoy discipline. A soldier's Laotian wife, being observed to be pregnant, was refused permission to travel. The infantry escort was carried in five or six lorries and as many others were loaded with supplies. A dozen jeeps were placed in the middle of the convoy, which was guarded at each end by an armoured car. Dupont was turned back when he tried to bluff his way to the head of the column behind the leading armoured car, from which position he had hoped to be able to sneak away at an early opportunity

527 Although by the time we got under way it was shortly before dawn, all Vientiane was still awake. Grinding our way through the streets we passed a *boun* in full swing with its temple-dancers still trapesing round their stage, and the magnified sobbings of a crooner not quite drowned in the roar of thirty exhausts. The streets were full of torch-carrying crowds.

"But in regard to the kingdom's laws, it is a certain fact that 671
there are very few of them, because, in my opinion, there is no 571
great need of any in order to live in accordance with the customs 626
of the land. The people are brought up to work, to have very little
to do with foreigners, not to undertake anything which might dis-
turb them and to live an idle and /115/ listless life although not
lacking any of the things necessary to preserve it. The king's will,
which does not greatly interfere with his people, takes the place
of a great many laws for them. . . . The manner in which the in-
habitants of the land live with one another is highly civil and
obliging. Unfriendliness and quarrels are banished. . . they all have
enough to live on and get along on, so that one does not hear of
thieves except as a thing quite out of the ordinary. . . . But the /565/
mandarins do not behave in the same way. Indeed, their insolence
and their insulting and criminal conduct dim the praise which the
common people merit on this account, because they abuse the
power which they have in the kingdom, and when they see some-
thing which pleases them. . . they act in such wise as to find means
for taking possession of it.

"But if we should now pass to the person of the king in order to 643*
describe him, there is no monarch, no matter how powerful, whom 174
he does not regard as beneath him, and it would indeed seem that 648
he affects not to yield in any particular to the emperors of China. . .
Only rarely does he appear in public. . . preferring to be worshiped
by his people as a hidden God rather than as a man like themselves
and of the same nature. . . He allows himself to be seen only twice
/116/ a year, for a period of three days, by his people, who re-
ceive this grace from their prince with such gratitude and joyous
sentiments that he forgets nothing on these occasions which might
contribute to their amusement. For this purpose there are several /527/●
elephants which are trained to do a thousand little tricks and several wild
animals which are kept chained and made to fight. . . finally there
are wrestlers and gladiators and others, with their skirmishes which
last until last until evening and terminate all this rejoicing. . .

"Of all the prerogatives which he (the king) has, and which are 643*
a further mark of the extent of his power, that of having several 576
petty tributary kings in his dependency who come to his court to do
him homage and acknowledge him as their sovereign and who give
him superb presents, is by no means the least. He receives these
ambassadors in a great parlor seated on an extremely high throne
and garbed in his ceremonial robes, and replies to their civilities

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(Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

Besides these major holidays there are a certain number of others which are more religious than secular in character and which fall in between the ones dealt with above.

In the course of the sixth month (April-May), for example, a religious holiday is celebrated in memory of the first leaders of the Buddhist religion.

At the end of the eleventh month, on a date which is fixed in accordance with the rites and which varies from one year to another, a celebration takes place in the pagodas in honor of the men who first introduced Buddhism into Indo-China.

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Finally, after the twelfth month (November or December), comes the feast of penitence which applies to all the faithful. During a [174] kind of Lent which lasts for nine days, true believers must abstain from certain foods and from all sex relations.

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Since our establishment in Laos the province capitals and all the centers where Europeans live have celebrated the National Holiday on July 14 which the natives call Boun-Phi-Falang-Sete (Holiday of the French Genie) or, by onomatopoeia, Boun Ka-Tor-Yu-Yet. [C. A. M. Translator's note. The latter term seems to be an approximation of the French Quatorze juillet ("July 14").]

MORES AND CUSTOMS

101

By reason of their diverse origins and the relations into which they have entered with neighboring peoples, as well as by the cross-breeding which has taken place, the races of Laos necessarily have characteristics, costumes, dwellings and, in a word, mores and customs which differ to a greater or less extent from one race to another (1).

(1) On this question of mores and customs we shall have recourse from time to time to a notice entitled Le Laos français which was written by the Superior Resident in Laos and based on reports and local monographs which were provided by our administrators and are in consequence authoritative.

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If we have consistently reproduced here extracts from the above work, this is because they provide an admirable summation

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who work gold mines--and by the inhabitants of several regions, whose state of fortune would nevertheless enable them to use a more precious metal.

Jewelry and examples of the goldsmith's art are found in different forms and types which vary greatly with the region and race, as will be seen by the nomenclature given in Chapter IX.

262

Food. The Laotian scorns the pleasures of the table, and is generally a moderate eater and drinker. Steam-cooked glutinous rice forms the basis of his food supply. To this he adds salt, peppers, various other spices, fresh or preserved fish, etc. Besides these, but less frequently, his day-to-day diet may be varied with poultry, eggs, buffalo meat, beef and pork, as well as venison. To be sure, it is mainly on the occasion of public or private festivals, which are fairly numerous in the course of the year, that the Laotian improves on his usual rather frugal fare in this way.

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The customary beverage is water which may be taken directly from the rivers or first be hastily decanted into jars or water-coolers of porous earthenware. In general, Laotians prefer water taken directly from the river to that which has been filtered. Finally, the people of Laos consume rice brandy which is obtained by distillation, and a kind of beer made by cold fermentation of rice mixed with paddy husks.

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The use of these drinks, aside from rare exceptions, is reserved for holidays.

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Physical appearance, character, occupations. The Laotian's character is, in general, mild, friendly and happy. His physiognomy is [181] open and smiling. Not quarrelsome by nature, he even shrinks from coming to blows in extreme cases and prefers to end a dispute with an outburst of laughter rather than with blows.

Since, all in all, it has few needs and inhabits a land with luxuriant vegetation which is abundantly favored with products to be had for the scavenging, this happy people can easily satisfy its needs and be content with its fate. [Illustration alongside text here.]

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It is assuredly lazy, but out of indifference much rather than out of any deliberate intent. It cannot grasp the advantage or utility of a regular and prolonged effort beyond what is strictly necessary to provide it with a living and a few distractions to which, in reality, its own joyous disposition makes the greatest contribution.

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To the men are reserved the chief tasks, which have a more virile and noble character than those which are the women's lot.

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346 Pagodas are always built on ground which has been perfectly leveled, is quite extensive and is surrounded by a wooden palisade or brick wall of elbow height.

[485] Within the pagoda enclosures there are bonzeries and dependent structures to serve as quarters for the bonzes, schools for their pupils and hostelries for travelers.

735 The construction and upkeep of pagodas are entirely dependent on the generous liberality of the faithful. Thus these edifices can be used 346 as a criterion for discovering both the state of prosperity of a region and the religious faith of its inhabitants.

[778] As used to be the case for our churches, Laotian pagodas and even their enclosures are, according to the customs of the land, sanctuaries which confer immunity against legal prosecution for certain crimes and misdemeanors.

[527] It is also in the enclosure and sometimes under the cloisters and verandas of the pagodas that the inhabitants gather on the legal holidays, and also private holidays, which are known as "Ngans".

844 Childbirth. Dr. Estrade describes the delivery of a woman of southern Laos as follows. The preliminaries, the operation itself and post-delivery procedure are the same, with only slight differences in detail, in northern Laos, and we may therefore quote Dr. Estrade's description as applicable to all of Laos in general.

"Childbirth never takes place in the house inhabited by the pregnant woman or her direct relatives, but always in the home of a neighbor or distant relative who gives hospitality to the patient until she is up and about again. The duration of pregnancy is counted in moons, as in all calculations of time, the moon being the essential element for the Laotian in the measurement of time and the occurrence of a great many phenomena. When a woman reaches the last moon 777 of her pregnancy she takes certain precautions all tending to delay 821 delivery until the first phase of the new moon, since births during the last phases are signs of misfortune [189] such as the death of the child, [782] deformity, etc. These prejudices have such force that parents are careless in caring for any child born during the last phases of the moon, and in such a case all of their effort goes into prayers, offerings to the bonzes and the making of votive offerings (1)

(1) This assertion should not, however, be taken too literally or in any general sense. This is a prejudice which is kept up by the bonzes in their own self-interest, and is easy to see through. (Author's note.)

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wax candles decorated with flowers, cigarettes and a sum of money. (Author's note)

the family from the hands of her patient.

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"Two or three days after her confinement ends the mother must go to the pagoda and give a few presents to the bonzes, who give her in return a few cotton threads which she fastens to her wrists " (4).

(4) Dr. Estrade, 1895. Dictionnaire et Guide franco-laotien. [113]

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Cases of dystocia and other childbearing difficulties are very rare in Laos, thanks to the physiological law which decrees that childbirth shall occur all the more naturally insofar as one comes closer to the primitive type and as one's body has not been deformed either by certain professional attitudes or by artifices of dress. [191] But when any difficulty of this type does occur the Laotian midwives are extremely skilful. Their hands take the place of the steel instruments in our gynecological and surgical arsenal, and their results are usually successful both for mother and child.

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When the newly delivered mother is allowed to get up there occur traditional feasts and celebrations, the brilliance of which

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varies with the status of the young mother's parents. It is generally during these happy gatherings that the bonzes or sorcerers choose

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the name which the newborn child is to bear. They usually base their choice on some peculiarity of the coloring or eyes, or on a phase of

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the moon. The name will be replaced by another if the child falls sick, for in this case, as they say, the old name was unpleasing to his "Phis," that is to say to his personal tutelary spirits.

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Infanticide. Scarcely any cases of infanticide can be cited in Laos, and abortions are extremely rare or at least very well hidden. For when cases do occur it is among members of a class which, because of the rank it holds, is anxious to conceal its faults from the mass of the people.

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In popular belief abortion, whether voluntary or natural, is regarded as a punishment of heaven or as a case of aberration which cannot fail to draw down the utmost scorn on the guilty parties and their accomplices.

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Marriage. Marriage in Laos is made ready for long in advance, thanks to the liberty which young people of both sexes enjoy. The latter meet one another at every celebration and can communicate

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The members of the family and the local officials w[illegible]head with the ablutions and last toilet of the deceased. They wrapped the body in a shroud of white cotton material, and it was then placed temporarily on a mattress surrounded by green branches, flowers and a large number of yellow wax candles which were kept constantly lit and replaced as necessary.

A shed was built in the garden of the house to serve as a kitchen, for it would be necessary to prepare various foods--rice, cakes, etc.--both day and night without any respite. This food would be offered to all comers--relatives, friends, neighbors and even passersby--up to the day of cremation.

Visitors soon began to stream in, and no one arrived with empty hands. Everyone brought an offering proportionate to his means. Some brought a bouquet of flowers or some fruit, others brought pieces of cotton cloth, wax, firewood, rice, pork or buffalo meat, brandy, fish, etc.

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Grief took up very little of the time of the dead person's relatives and friends, for the latter quickly busied themselves with keeping their guests occupied, treating them well and being in several places at once so that the guests would lack for nothing. No sadness, moreover, was to be seen among the visitors who arrived in great hordes to profit by the windfall and take part in the funeral feasts now being prepared.

[204] In their Pythagorean philosophy, the Laotians regard death much as any other of the vital functions which normally participates in transformations of matter, as for example conception and birth. In addition to this they are fervent disciples of Epicurus without realizing it, and love life in all its forms for the pleasures which, in spite of its brief span, it holds for individuals who can limit their needs and moderate their desires. Although they dread death during their years of youth and virility, this is not because they are afraid of it but mainly because they see in it an end to the many pleasures of life. What is more, they are old hands at finding pretexts for enjoying such pleasures and at discovering all possible propitious occasions for organized rejoicing.

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Funeral ceremonies are celebrations in the same way as marriages, assumptions of garments, births, cutting children's hair and the other public festivals which occur regularly each year at fixed times. In 527
Laos everything ends in libations, songs and feasts, with unfettered merriment and a profusion of flowers and cloth materials whose

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colors are bright and harmonious. It is during these days of rejoicing that the first amorous intrigues often spring up between young people which, generally speaking, end in marriage.

Preparations for the funeral celebration went on, and dusk had not yet fallen when music and singing began to be heard and plates of food were passed around, as well as jars full of rice brandy.

Immediately after the death, men went to the forest to select the dead, but not decaying, tree whose trunk was to serve for making the coffin. Others prepared the pedestal on which it was to be placed and the roof which would surmount it.

The coffin was finally finished. Trapezoidal in shape, with the base uppermost, it rested on a wooden pedestal decorated with carvings. The roof placed above it was copied from the roofs of pagodas. The frame was made of bamboo lattice covered with glued calico, and the whole was ornamented with gold paper cutouts, streamers and multicolored cotton floss.

[205] The body was sealed in its coffin, where it rested on a bed of aromatic branches and leaves. It was fully dressed and surrounded by bedclothes. A sliding cover was dovetailed into place, and all joints sealed with an indestructible caulking compound made from lime, clay, albumen and paddy husks. [Illustration alongside text here]

The catafalque stood in the middle of the room, one of the walls of which had been removed, as we have seen. It was surrounded by flowers, green branches, lighted candles and stick incense perfumed with powdered benzoin.

In the course of the next four days the province bonzes and officials arrived, and all recited the ritual prayers in Pali around the catafalque without understanding anything of what they said but scrupulously observing the consecrated rhythm and intonation.

In the meantime a funeral pyre had been built on the sandy bank of the Mékong, left bare by the low waters, using about three [206] steres of dry wood which had been impregnated with resin, wood oil and kerosene.

Solidly held in place at the side by six heavy stakes of green wood, the pyre was surmounted by a high canopy or rectangular pavilion, the roof of which rose in tiers and was covered with flowered cotton cloth and decorated with gold paper garlands, cutouts and many-colored streamers.

This pavilion, supported by four posts decorated in the same taste, would presently serve to shelter the coffin.

764 some forty meters long folded across its width until it was the size of a man's hand (with thumb and little finger spread). The strip was unrolled ahead of the coffin and was held by the youngest of the dead person's sons, who led the mourning. Then the bonzes, relatives, officials and best friends of the deceased took positions on each side and held on to the strip with one hand, as we would hold on to pall-bearers' cords. Thus constituted, the procession set off ahead of the coffin, drawing it along in a manner of speaking.

Tom-toms, gongs, cymbals, clarinets and the Laotian organ were heard during the processional, as well as songs and improvisations. When it reached the funeral pyre the procession circled it three times and deposited the coffin on it.

The spectators then took up positions under sheltering bushes, in shady spots or even in full sunlight, depending on their rank. All was in readiness to light the fire, which was to be provided by the Governor of the province, a delegate of the king of Luang-Prabang who is the "master of life" (1), for the deceased was a high official.

[643] (1) The king of Luang-Prabang bears the title Tiao-Tsi-Vit, master of life.

[208] One important rite still remained to be performed: the last ablutions of water and brandy on the face, chest and hands of the body.

Then men climbed up on the pyre and removed the canopy of the catafalque, leaving the bamboo frame showing through the torn wrapping. They broke the lid of the coffin into splinters with great ax blows and thus exposed the body of the deceased, which exuded such a strong odor that all the spectators on the leeward side fell back.

The final toilet took place at this time. The men who do this work absorb such quantities of brandy to drive off miasmas and stimulate their own courage that their gestures and merriment, at such a time and place, would seem to us to be out of place. But here things are not seen in the same light, and the gesticulations of all these folk armed with axes and various containers and their grotesque attitudes around the open coffin merely stimulate the spectators' joy. The songs and music had not ceased, and wrestling matches and animal combats were about to take place. The wrestlers took the measure of one another and came to grips with their hands flat open, while the

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boxers pummeled one another with their fists. Their hands were smeared with a mixture of oil and soot so that they would leave a mark wherever they hit. The tilters were hot and eager, but did not greatly hurt one another, for their chief effort was to attract attention by means of gestures and plastic attitudes which would impress the girls and women with their supple, nervous and muscular bodies, shining like bronze under the sun because of the sweat which the effort of fighting brought on.

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Combats between buffaloes followed these amusements, then cocks were brought on and the whole audience crowded around. Passions rose to a fever pitch in the whole mass of spectators, who had been imbibing brandy freely. Ironic clamors rained down on the men who had let themselves be beaten and whose faces were smeared with black on their return, while enthusiastic shouts greeted the victors. In spite of all the excitement, the sun, the heat and the brandy, the whole mass of people remained quite moderate and the festivities [209] [Illustration] [210] [Blank page] [211] always kept a gay and gracious air. The enthusiasm for the fighters, the shouts and the bravos only lasted for a moment, and all of them, both lucky and unlucky, were sponged, given drink and cherished with equal solicitude so that they soon forgot their momentary rivalry.

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Children of both sexes then approached the pyre. They had all fastened their sampots and skirts in view of what was to happen next. Sacks were brought which were full of copper coins, to which a few silver coins had been added. Members of the family of the deceased then climbed up on the pyre and threw this small change broadcast into the horde of children. An indescribable tumult followed, accompanied by sharp cries. There was quarreling and fighting, and many little pairs of hands could be seen grabbing for the same copper coins. All of them would have liked to get the few white coins.

The parents and older people watched the coin hunt, which reminded them of the time when they were children and at the same time reminded them of the name of a dead man whose family had been generous to them once in similar circumstances.

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Now all the ritual ceremonies had been accomplished and it remained only to proceed to the last one: setting fire to the pyre.

Stiff lengths of rattan were attached to the four corners of the catafalque and fastened to the ground with stakes. Rockets slid along the lengths of rattan, and when the time came they would shoot up and supposedly light the pyre. In reality this is only a

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Sports and games. These are widespread in Laos.

"Boxing has fervent disciples there, as does flat-handed wrestling. Some of the champions have remarkable professional skill, agility and cleverness which never lose their elegance.

"The Laotians play with balls and shuttlecocks, but without using either their hands or rackets. Any other part of the body, for example, from the foot to the head, may be used to return a ball or shuttlecock. Nearly all young people play this extremely graceful game, which requires great suppleness, a quick eye and perfect ease of movement, which in this game should be neither jerky nor violent (1).

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(1) This game is also played in Burma, whence it was doubtless imported into Laos. The ball is made of large-mesh rattan latticework and is spherical in form with a diameter of ten to twelve centimeters. The shuttlecock is half-spherical. It is of similar construction, covered with cloth and provided with feathers along the edge. (Author's note.)

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"Like all Orientals, Laotians have a passion for games of chance in any form. This is the race's only real vice, and the French administration is obliged to maintain active surveillance over it.

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"A form of chess, more complicated than the game played in Europe, is widely played, and a few players are highly reputed for their perfect grasp of the game." (Le Laos français.)

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Celebrations and festivals. In addition to the legal public holidays, the temperament of the Laotians leads them to celebrate a great many others, for the most diverse and the most futile reasons. In principle, the Laotian makes no expenditures to ameliorate his daily fare and the pleasures of the table, as far as choice foods go, are indifferent to him. This does not prevent him, however, from organizing celebrations among relatives, friends and neighbors which anyone can attend without being specially invited. This custom of giving public festivities, or "Ngans" to use the native term, where everyone eats and drinks, has a good time, jokes and makes love, shows the friendly side of the Laotian character and the extreme sociability of the people. Those whose personal resources are too limited to cover the expenses of a "Ngan" either join with others in similar straits or go skirmishing through the city or village in search of the money, food, brandy and wax needed to accomplish their plan.

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Since there is not, so to speak, any class of salaried workers in Laos except in certain types of work and in transport by pirogues and rafts, the inhabitants of any given center lend one another their help in farming, harvesting, building houses or pirogues, etc. Taking turns, the one who has asked help of his neighbors will put on a celebration for them when the work is over, and will himself receive an invitation from someone else in return for help which he has given.

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Laotian celebrations, in which the bonzes are never forgotten, are usually given under the verandas of the pagodas or in their dependencies, unless they take place in the host's own home or under sheds specially constructed for the purpose on one side. The latter is always the case in a "Ngan" given for those who have helped in building a house, and the same is true for a birth or marriage.

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Celebrations generally begin towards four or five in the afternoon when the heat is beginning to wane. They last all night and sometimes resume on the following day after the guests have relaxed for a few hours. Some "Ngans" go on in this way for nearly a week and are interrupted only by the coming of the Laotian sabbath, a day of absolute rest when only the preparation of food is permitted, and no work or pleasure. By the light of kerosene lamps borrowed here and there, or of resinous torches, the girls, who are decked out in all their finery, are stationed in a line squatting down against a wall or partition. Before them there are [221] vases made of copper, silver or porcelain. They all pretend to be busy with minor tasks and may imitate, for example, the preparation of food. But in reality this is only their way of keeping some kind of countenance.

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The adults and children of both sexes are massed at each end of the row of girls. Then the young men, their heads covered with scarves, come and squat down opposite the girls and with their heads still covered begin an animated conversation which soon turns into regular flirting. If there is enough space the orchestra takes up its position nearby and in the center, between the young people, are the singers, improvisers and "Kene" players. Cakes, fruit, quids of betel, cigarettes, rice brandy and various condiments are passed around.

Spectators who have not been specially invited come and stand behind the young people, as do passersby who drop in for a quid, a cigarette, a cup of brandy or a bowl of rice, or to listen to the songs and music for a little while.

527 836 584 From time to time a girl will get up and leave the celebration. She is soon followed by a young man, and both disappear into the shadows, escorted for form's sake by a little boy or girl. This is the beginning of a liaison and will doubtless end in marriage, unless the young gallant is in too much of a hurry, clumsy or flighty and finds himself faced with paying one of the special fines if he compromises the girl and refuses to make up for it.

782 527 531 Offerings to the pagodas. There are other "Ngans" which have a half profane and half religious purpose. That is to say, they are established either to thank heaven for a lucky event or to solicit its clemency. They may occur, for example, either to celebrate a return to health after a long illness, or the success of a trading season or hunting or fishing expedition, or to call down blessings from on high on a trip which is being made or planned, etc. These types of "Ngans" then involve offerings to the pagodas and to the bonzes, offerings which bear the name of "Tone-Pheung" (literally, wax cut in pieces). They are so named because of the wax imitation flowers which decorate [222] a kind of pyramid or small pagoda supporting them, called "Pha-Sate" (in French, Faithful to God).

These little edifices are built and decorated by the friends or guests with a rapidity, a taste and an elegance which would be astounding if we did not know the degree to which artistic feeling is innate in the Laotian, and if we were not aware of the prodigious skill with which he is endowed.

Built on a bamboo framework covered with pieces of banana wood, carved with festoons and ornamental moldings, and arranged in tiers of roofs, in minarets and in columns, these "Pha-Sate," which are always between one and two meters in height, seem to be made of ivory and affect an extraordinary variety of forms each of which is more graceful than the last and which seem to be inspired by the architecture of the pagodas of India, Cambodia and Burma.

It will not be in vain to note that the only purpose of these ephemeral edicules, which will keep their new look for only a short while, is merely to present the wax offering in a less banal and more artistic manner than if it had been given in the form of thick, heavy, massive blocks.

The "Pha-Sate" are mounted on stretchers which are carried by men. Besides their wax flowers, they are decorated with natural

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flowers, pompoms and multicolored cotton streamers. Thick wax candles are stuck to the uprights, into which coins, gold nuggets, gold leaf and precious stones are sunk.

The wax is destined for worship purposes and the other offerings will be used for the upkeep of pagodas or for ornamenting sacred statues. The bonzes are not forgotten, for on the platform of the "Pha-Sate," either between the uprights or in special baskets ad hoc, there are articles of clothing, bedclothes, kettles, talaps, betel accessories, etc.

The day preceding the delivery of the "Tone-Pheung" to the pagoda is spent in making all kinds of preparations--cooking food, making betel quids, cigarettes, cakes and other necessary items [223] for the morrow's celebration. In the evening there is a kind of rehearsal for the "Ngan" in which the singers and musicians practice until an extremely late hour while the mothers and married women continue to work in the presence of the young men and girls talking merrily.

On the morning of the day when the "Tone-Pheung" is to be presented to the pagoda the bonzes are invited to a copious feast which continues long after their departure among relatives, friends and neighbors. The bonzes come back in the afternoon to bless the "Tone-Pheung" and to say certain prayers. Then, towards five in the afternoon, the procession forms and five or six bearers, depending on the weight, take the stretcher supporting the offering and raise it to their shoulders. The men follow first after the procession, and then the women, and the latter carry lighted wax candles in their hands. Musicians bring up the rear, and the whole crowd moves toward the pagoda by the longest route. There the "Pha-Sate" or the "Tone-Pheung" is taken around the enclosure three times and finally put down at the entrance to the pagoda. Those present place their candles in a special holder at the foot of the great statue of Buddha, and then withdraw while the bonzes recite prayers in the presence of whoever is making the offering and his relatives.

The guests then return to the home of their host, where the celebration goes on all night and sometimes even lasts into the following day.

The bonzes remove the wax from the "Pha-Sate" and use it to make candles for worship purposes. The flowers are placed at the feet of Buddha, and the coins and precious stones are put aside.

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182 Those desirous of obtaining special graces give similar celebrations which last several days and several nights, and the offerings are more beautiful and more varied. It is generally on occasions of this sort that assumptions of the habit by bonzes and their pupils are particularly likely to occur.

Being present at these ceremonies confers certain indulgences, and that is why they are so punctually followed and why all those who take part try [224] to help in celebrating them by offerings of all sorts.

[196] On the spot where the celebration is to be held, a sort of pulpit is constructed beforehand where the bonzes stand as they come up by turns to read passages chosen for the occasion from the sacred books. They never allow themselves to be disturbed by the surrounding noise, but stand as if transfixed in the middle of the songs and shouts.

It is readily understandable that this should be an agreeable way to procure one's salvation, but since it is very costly it is not within everyone's means. Fortunately, there are ways of compromising with [565] heaven which enable even the poorest to associate themselves in these great celebrations, in accordance with their resources, by means of even very modest offerings and to benefit therefrom both spiritually and materially.

There is no doubt but that a belief in the efficacy of plenary and partial indulgences enters into their consideration, but it is equally reasonable to suppose that the attraction of the profane pleasures which one enjoys in the course of these gatherings is not the least of the motivating causes which lead the Laotian people to frequent them so zealously.

[71] Pirogue races. We have seen that pirogue races and regattas took place during some of the legal holidays, and a few words of explanation on this matter are given below.

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501 This custom must have been introduced by the Malays and then handed down from the Kmers to the Laotians, following an ascending direction from south to north.

The pirogues used in the "Souang-Hua" (1) regattas are specially

(1) Literally, pirogues which run.

built and exclusively reserved for this use. Sometimes as much as twenty-five meters in length, they are hewn out of specially chosen wood and have most elegant delicate and elongated lines. Their extremities are armed with what appear to be slender gilded horns. The exterior is lacquered black with gold ornamentation and the

586 the Laotians." (Le Laos français.) [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

764 Deaths. Funerals. Everything takes place among the Thais
769 as among the Laotians. The poor are buried, while well-to-do people are cremated in great pomp. Celebrations take place at which animals are sacrificed, there is a great deal to eat and quantities of rice brandy and rice beer are consumed. But here there is ancestor worship, and so the altar of the "Phis" of the house and the body itself receive offerings as long as the funeral feasts last.

After cremation, which, as in India, is practiced on a raised pyre at the bottom of a pit dug in the ground, the ashes and burnt bones are sealed in a jar with a few silver coins placed there to pay for the dead person's food during his wanderings through "space."

The jar is buried on the site of the pyre. Then [237] [Illustration] [238] [Blank page] [239] the mattresses, bolster and pillow of the deceased are placed on top, as well as food and a drinking vase full of water. All of his clothes are fastened to poles planted fan-wise on one side of the tomb. Sometimes a fence closes off the site of the tomb.

In some regions the jar containing the remains and ashes of the deceased is buried in a hidden place in the mountains, known only to the dead person's closest relatives.

This procedure, which is not a ritual one, is doubtless intended to place the mortal remains beyond the reach of any profaners of sepulchres who might be attracted by the temptation of the few coins mixed with the ashes.

Finally, a little house is often built over the tomb which is supposed to represent the dwelling place of the deceased.

•527 Games. Celebrations. Festivals. Like their Laotian brothers, the Thais are great lovers of celebrations. The chief holiday, one which is celebrated in May or June every year and during which all work ceases for four days, is that of the dead or Boun-Phi-Tai.

782 Animal sacrifices are made to the different genii, and are
769 accompanied by prayers in honor of the dead. The favor of each genie or "Phi" spirit is gained by sacrificing a particular animal, as a dog for the "Phi" of tigers, chickens and pigs for the "Phis" of the mountains, a goat for those which watch over the roads leading to watercourses, and buffalo and oxen, finally, for the "Phis" of the

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village and those of ancestors. Prayers for the dead are said, and when they are over the head and feet of a goat, crude clay statuettes representing two men, two buffalo and two oxen, and numerous wax candles are placed on a raft made of banana trees. The raft is launched full into the current of a river while men collect on the banks and fire salvos of shots and shoot off fireworks.

The musical instruments of the Thais are the "Kene" and [240] a kind of clarinet with two tubes, reinforced by gongs and tom-toms.

Their songs are not at all noisy and are much more like monotonous chants.

The Thais have a very characteristic game, and this is the game of the "inexhaustible jar." A jar of rice beer is placed on the floor of a house and five bamboo tubes stuck in it to serve as straws. Five men take positions around the jar, and each of them puts a tube in his mouth. Into each of the jars, and above a kind of porous stopper made of pressed paddy husks, water is poured by means of an ox horn with a hole in the end. At a given signal both men and women begin to suck conscientiously while the contents of the ox horn are poured into each jar three times in succession. The ones who empty their jar first win, and the losers have to drink the contents of ten horns of water poured over what is left of the beer in their jar.

The Thai beer does not have a bad taste, and its alcoholic strength is equivalent to that of hard cider, which it closely resembles in flavor. Although the additions of water decrease the beverage's percentage of alcohol it nevertheless produces a slight intoxication, due primarily to the speed with which it is sucked through the straw. But the inebriety never degenerates into a quarrel, and provokes nothing but laughter, songs and unadulterated merriment.

Who would believe that the Thais have the custom of throwing "confetti"? Nothing is more true, however, for in the celebrations at the end of harvest, which take place in December or January, the merrymakers throw cotton seeds mixed with paddy, with husks, and sometimes also with ashes.

Tribal Tai

291 cover their bust with a small short jacket which is very close-fitting and bright in color. It has a heart-shaped opening on the chest and, like the men's jacket, is ornamented with galloons and passementerie. For celebrations and ceremonies Lu women wear a heavy turban on their head which is folded flat or pleated, shaped like a mitre and generally made of black silk spangled with gold.

301 Both men and women pierce the lobes of their ears [246] with a broad opening, into which they introduce hollow gold or silver cylinders which are sometimes as large as three centimeters in diameter.

306 Great lovers of jewelry, the Lus number skilled jewelers and goldsmiths among them who make hair coil plaques, ear cylinders, flat braided metal belts with wide chased and checkered buckles, bracelets, rings, hilts and sheaths for daggers and swords, etc. [Illustration alongside text here]

411 The Lus almost always wear daggers and swords. Each of them, so
293 to speak, possesses a rifle, generally flintlock, which by the shape of the stock, the length of the barrel and the many bands which adorn it greatly resembles the long Moukhala so dear to our Arabs in Algeria.

[36] Lu villages are clean, and the houses are arranged in a checkerboard pattern.

[33] The Lus have a high reputation as breeders of oxen and horses.

527 A great lover of celebrations and parades, this boisterous people sets off gunpowder at every opportunity, and there is no festival, private or public, so small that it is not accompanied by salvos and fireworks.

[77] From their contact with the Burmese the men have retained a
535 [247] [Illustration] [248] [Blank page] [249] taste for dancing and for sword fights mingled with dance steps in which they manifest a real grace and elegance.

"Among other forms of amusement, the men execute, with a truly remarkable suppleness and skill, sword dances which are perfectly elegant. Naked to the waist, with their trousers rolled up and bunched and a wooden sword in each hand whose cutting edge has been dipped in dye so that the thrusts will leave a mark, the two champions confront one another. Moulinets, parries and returns follow one another without apparent effort, and the movements are undulating and rapid but without any abruptness. The men seem to be caressing one another, not fighting, and yet the slashes leave their colored traces on the skin of the vanquished. Direct thrusts are forbidden, but the entire body from head to foot is fair game for the opponent. Thus during the

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Years	Number of animals exported	Average purchase price in Laos	Sale price at outlet markets
		francs	francs
1898	103 Horses	50	112.50
1899	185 Horses	From 30 to 125	From 88.50 to 225
	14 Mares	From 30 to 75	From 40 to 95

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Finally, we recommend the introduction of donkeys into Laos, with a view toward producing mules by coupling the donkeys with Laotian mares. The mules of Yunnan, which are highly reputed, reach heights as great as 1.32 meters. Extremely sturdy, they can readily carry a net weight of ninety kilograms of merchandise, not counting the saddle and pack-saddle. It is obvious that much use might be made of these animals in Laos for all kinds of transport.

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Buffalo. Buffalo breeding is much in honor throughout all of Laos. It supplies the needs of agriculture and of food consumption, which absorbs a large number of these animals, particularly young ones. Many of them, in fact, are sacrificed on the occasion of celebrations and various ceremonies, while others are used daily for food in some of the larger centers.

It may truly be said that buffalo are raised everywhere, and since this animal is extremely hardy it can always find enough to eat, even in the forests.

The administration is encouraging the raising of buffalo in a most effective way, and since our arrival in Laos the work has grown by such proportions that exports of buffalo to nearby regions has assumed genuine importance. (4,721 head in 1898 and 3,144 in 1899.) When we entered into possession of Laos, however, the land had been largely depopulated of its animals. They had been removed by the Siamese, and it is nothing short of miraculous that the herds have been restored in so short a time despite the considerable losses caused by periodic outbreaks of epizootic disease, often extremely violent.

These favorable results have been achieved thanks to the wise foresight of the higher authorities, who prohibited all exports and imports as long as the bovine plague lasted.

272 The distillation methods used are good ones, but the equipment used leaves much to be desired and does not make it possible to obtain rectified alcohol of a high degree. By taking 25 or 28 proof native alcohol and distilling it for a second time with European equipment, a fairly good-tasting alcohol can be obtained which is 68 to 72 proof.

389 Powder-making. The inhabitants of Laos make the powder themselves which they use for hunting and for fireworks. They know how to proportion and triturate the ingredients--charcoal, saltpeter (1)

[317] (1) The saltpeter which is collected in grottoes containing calcareous rocks is chiefly made up of masses of droppings from birds and bats. The bat is called "Kiea" and saltpeter "Khi-Kiea," or, literally, Droppings of bats.

and sulphur--in order to make either explosive powder or fusing powder.

792 The bonzes are the fireworks-makers par excellence who make the many and varied fireworks without which no celebration is really 527 complete. Bombs, firecrackers, Roman candles, serpents, pinwheels, 389 etc. and, in a word, almost all the usual fireworks are made using rudimentary processes and local products.

389 The rockets (Bang-Fai) deserve special mention. They consist of a body containing fusing powder, to which is attached a wick several meters long and made of spun cotton or sometimes even of paper. The latter is smeared with mealed gunpowder mixed with gum, and the whole is fastened to a directing shaft. If the rocket is an Aeolian one, its rear is provided with a kind of Pan's pipe made of bamboo tubes which gives forth a harmonious sound as it describes its trajectory in the air.

The rockets vary greatly in size. In some the powder weighs only a few decagrams, and [468] the guide shaft is from two to three meters long. Other larger ones carry a "Mune" of powder (about 12 kilograms) and sometimes more, and the guide shaft is a whole stalk of bamboo some 15 meters long and from 12 to 15 centimeters in base diameter.

Rockets are generally decorated with gilded or colored paper. With the application of rice paste motifs, some of them manage to look very like a dragon with threatening jaws and terrifying eyes, and in these the body envelops the shaft and the head contains the Aeolian harp as well as the powder cylinder. The stands used for launching

389 the rockets are naturally in proportion to the size of the latter. For large rockets, they are made up of a kind of broad, triangular ladder, the top of which is leaned against a tree top.

524 **Hot air balloons.** In northern Laos, balloons are constructed
527 out of paper which is either made locally or imported from China. They are cylindro-spherical in shape and a little gondola of rattan cane is suspended from them by a cotton thread. In the gondola there is an oil cup filled with lard and provided with two or three cotton wicks, and these are lit in order to keep the air in the balloons hot for a given length of time.

Since they are generally launched in the evening at the time of the great holiday of the twelfth month (October-November), the absence of wind makes it possible to follow their aerial course as long as the cotton wicks continue to give off light.

[469] [Illustration at top of page]

CHAPTER X

1. PRESENT ROUTES OF COMMUNICATION BY LAND

487 We have already dealt in Chapter II with the routes of communication by river, and so shall deal here only with land routes (1).

(1) See Appendix XXVII.

In Laos they are of three kinds:

1. The cart roads negotiable by ox-carts and wagons;

2. The mule tracks over which elephants, horses, mules and oxen can pass.

3. The paths or even mere trails which can be used only by travelers on foot.

[481] [470] As a consequence of the ingrained habit which both animals and people have of always walking in single file, the roads of Laos, like those of many other lands, are reduced to the width of a path which is marked on the ground either by the trampling animals and men, or by two deep ruts into which the wheels of carts sink. In the forest, depending on how wide and how high a path has been cleared through the undergrowth, a road may be practicable for elephants, men on horseback, oxen or only for travelers on foot.

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Then the royal retinue proceeds to the That Luang where the king must spend the night in a sala. He is accompanied by his ministers and in principle may not leave until they come and fetch him.

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On the morning of the fifteenth day, the king, carried by his guards, goes to make his offerings to the bonzes, and the whole day is devoted to public rejoicing, of which one form deserves to be mentioned. It is the game of the Thi khi.

Its origin, so far as we know at present, remains obscure. The Pra Lak Pra Lam tells us that Indra and Rama played Thi Khi together, and that since that day it has been played at Vientiane.

Let us observe that the game was unknown at Luang Prabang. It was imported from the south. Tradition required that it be played on horseback, when it was played like polo.

At the present time it is played on foot with a stick with the end bent over like a crosier and a ball the size [47] of a child's head and is similar to hockey. There are two opposing sides, the office-holders and the people. The latter should in principle win two victories out of three games. The game has no rules, there is no umpire and no limit to the ground played on. Sometimes the ball goes off into the shrubbery, and all the players go and look for it. Only a hypothetical line indicates the limit of the enemy side. [641]

The feasts of Vat Inpeng and of Vat Ong Tu merely repeat those of Vat Simuong and That Luang.

[48]

THE SECULAR CEREMONIES

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The Sou Khouan can be considered as the transition between the purely religious ceremonies and the secular feasts.

Actually Sou Khouan means "call and reception of the soul." The Laotian has a profound belief in the transmigration of the soul. According to him, the human body is inhabited by thirty-two khouan (spirits) each of whom presides over the function of a member, an organ or an intellectual faculty.

When a human being dies, all of the thirty-two souls leave his body. According to the merits which have been acquired, they go either to the heaven of the gods, or to the province of the dead. Certain beings who have died in an abnormal manner, by suicide, drowning, etc., become wandering souls. They are to be feared, because they return to earth in order to torment the living, and one must make numerous sacrifices to them.

846 Next to her the child lies in a kadong (Indochinese van). Between the mattress and the kadong lies a dagger if it is a boy, a needle with some sewing thread if it is a girl, so that later the child may become a strong and brave man or a woman skilled in domestic arts.

844 The accoucheur, who is also a sorcerer, hangs on the roof a fishnet which reaches the ground and must completely cover the bed of the woman and the kadong of the newborn child. An incantation is recited intended to protect the mother and child from the Phi Phai, the souls of women who have died in childbirth or while pregnant, and which take the form of a night bird. The sorcerer stretches a white cotton thread around the bed and the hearth which will act as a barrier to the Phi Phai, and which also has the property of preventing the mother and child from having attacks of nausea [les bourbouilles].

846 In addition to the very frequent affusions and sitz baths, the woman takes every day two or three aromatic vapor baths. Her meals taken 262 inside the fishnet consist of rice, grilled chicken or pork seasoned with grilled salt and mixed with houa kha (a kind of gingerbread). She may drink only [55] hot decoctions of the root of a wild vine which has diuretic properties.

846 During the You Kam people take turns day and night helping the family watch over the mother and child. In order to keep awake they read aloud, make music, sing or play. This is the custom of 527 the vigil, the ngan which takes place whenever there is a feast or any other event.

The You Kam finishes at the end of eight days in Lower Laos, but lasts more than twenty days in the north.

Churching of Women. A day of ceremony is chosen for the woman who is leaving her childbed (ok Kam). This ok kam always takes place in the morning. The woman takes her bath in the river, while all the accessories which have served for the kam are removed. When she returns to the house, she attends the ceremony of the Sou Khouan. After this she takes up her normal life again, although she is obliged to abstain from certain foods which are liable to bring on post partum hemorrhages. When the mother and child are in good health, these alimentary precautions are relaxed fairly soon, and by the end of the second month many of these rules 853 are broken. Laotian mothers are in the habit of giving their children, as soon as the ok kam is performed, chewed rice, seasoned with salt, wrapped in a banana leaf and warmed on hot ashes. The newborn usually stand this diet fairly well.

301 The use of these magic shirts is also known in Cambodia. The designs
262 usually consist of flowers, geometric figures, tools, flowers, vegetable
751 branches, and of animals. Sometimes pictures drawn from Buddhist iconography can be recognized.

[174] Apparently the origin of tattooing is to be found in totemism. By
301 analyzing the Laotian tattooing designs, [63] it has been possible to recognize traces of sun worship, as well as the mythological role of the dog. But at the present time Laotians seem only to value tattooing as an artistic ornament.

The Divining Rod.

787 Among the curios which the tourist looks for in Laos, the most
823 easily found is a carved bamboo cane. Immediately below the head,
825 which is often of chased silver, there is a sort of checkered diagram made up of twenty-five little squares. Below this divining diagram are found, in succession from top to bottom, a zebu, a horse, a rakshasha or ogre, a tiger, a buffalo, a deer, an elephant. These animals correspond respectively to the days of the week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

It should be noted that, except for the buffalo and the deer, the others are the symbolical animals of the zodiac and correspond to the different cardinal points.

The Laotians consult these figures at different actions of their lives: choice of a wedding day, the hour for burial, etc. The diagram is used to calculate the hour, and the animals indicate the cardinal point which should be followed.

This cane is also found among the Man.

[64] THE NEW YEAR AND THE FEASTS OF THE FIFTH MONTH

527 The Laotian New Year always takes place between the 6th day
805 of the crescent moon of the 5th month and the 5th day of the crescent moon of the 6th month. The very core of the feast includes three days: the last day of the past year, the intermediate day and the New Year's day, properly so-called. The most picturesque ceremonies are those of Luang Prabang, for there tradition has been best preserved.

527 The programme of the feasts begins with a procession of royal elephants. Their heads ornamented with red and black painted designs, their drivers dressed in red tunics with yellow lapels, on their backs, the fifteen elephants go to the pagodas of Xieng Tong, Vat

May, and Vat Visun to render homage to the protecting genii of the village and chase away the evil spirits. 527

During three days the Laotians do no cooking. Fish, turtles, birds, etc., are bought in the big market and then set free as a sign of penitence and redemption of sins committed either voluntarily or not against living beings during the past year. 782

Possibly there is here a survival of the origin of the cycle of animals. According to Finot, at a very remote period, the custom of curing sick children by letting an animal go free had arisen. When a child was saved in this manner, he was said to have been born from this animal because he owed it life. He was forbidden to kill it, and the year of the child's birth was given the same [65] name as the animal. It is thus that the cycle of twelve years was established. 825 771

In the dry beds of the Mekong and of the Nam Khan, small that made of sand are built. Each one wishes the other a long life, whose number of years will equal the number of grains of sand forming the that, and great prosperity, for ill-luck has fled with the last day of the past year, and the New Year should bring as many riches as there are grains of sand in the that. Often around the principal that, other much smaller ones are erected, their number corresponding to the age of the builder. They express the wish of the one who has built them that he will see many more years added to those he has already lived. Actually these little that around the central mound are a reproduction of Mount Merou surrounded by different worlds (Cf. the symbolism of the That Luang). 521 805

In the pagodas the statues of Buddha are taken down from the altars and placed in little wooden prasat. They are sprinkled with perfumed water which flows in the hang-lin (a kind of gutter of gilded wood whose extremities represent the head of an aquatic monster), for the year now ending must be completely exhausted, and a minute cleansing, both material and spiritual, must leave a strictly clear way for the New Year. In the streets the young girls sprinkle not only the [562] bonzes whom they honor, but all the young men, to compensate for all the minor vexations they have endured from the men during the past year. The high dignitaries are not exempt from these showers of more or less clean water. Sometimes their faces are rubbed with lampblack or mud, when they have the ill luck of meeting a group of young girls. Do we have a survival of the theme of the svayamvara here (free choice of the man by the young girl)?

[66] The day in between, the day before New Year's day, is one of complete rest. All the events which occur during this day will determine

527 805 the course of the year for good or for bad. On the day of the New Year, a bassi is offered to His Majesty the King by the ministers and high dignitaries. Then a delegation of bonzes is admitted to the palace where, after receiving the ritual offerings, they are sprinkled in a cabin by His Majesty the King and members of the royal family.

Outside in the town the aspersions continue more than ever during [643] the whole week. During these feasts the King goes in a dugout to the grottoes of Xieng Men, opposite Luang Prabang, and to those of Pak Ou where he sprinkles the statues there. Then he comes to make the ritual aspersion of the Phra Bang, palladium of the kingdom, at the pagoda of Vat May.

527 7B During these feasts of the New Year, the dance of the Phou Gneu Gna Gneu takes place. These are legendary individuals considered the ancestors of the Laotians, whose story is as follows:

When Phou Lan Xong had pierced the gourd, the king of heaven sent his son Khoum Bolom to organize the country. While he was performing the mission entrusted to him by his father, a vine was seen to rise from the earth. It grew rapidly and soon covered the whole world with its shadow. Men ceased to see the sky and were deprived of light and heat. The king ordered this monstrous vine to be cut down, but nobody dared to risk doing this. Finally an aged couple [deux vieux époux] Phou Thao Gneu and Me Ngam, armed with a hatchet and preceding the son of heaven, come down to earth, announced that they were willing to undertake this perilous task. But they stipulated that after their death they would receive offerings and would be invoked at the beginning of meals and other business. Everybody [67] agreed to this. Then they attacked the vine with blows of the hatchet. At the end of three months and three days, the vine fell and crushed them in its fall, but the sun shone again on the world.

The agreement has been kept. Since that day the dance of the Phou Gneu Gna Gneu is one of the principal elements of the Laotian feast of the New Year.

527 825 The two dancers wear enormous cardboard masks. They listen on their knees to prayers read aloud to them, while alongside of them a lion waves its paws nonchalantly. This lion has rather a peculiar role. Apparently it is another survival of the legend of the cycle of animals. Not having any toys to give their children, the first ancestors had the idea of modeling one year a rat, another year an ox, then a tiger, a hare, a dragon, etc. The name of each animal designated the year during which it was used as a toy. Finally these little figures became alive and became the ancestors of the present day species. At

the present time only the lion is kept, for apparently its role is no longer very well known. 527 825

[68] THE HARVEST FESTIVAL

This takes place after the harvest, during the first and second months, and is held in the open countryside. Its purpose is to glorify "the soul of rice." 527 243

It is not until the threshing has been completed and the rice piled up in heaps that the master of the harvest consults his neighbors and chooses with them the day of celebration. Light shelters must then be built on his field around the threshing area to accommodate the guests. On the top of the pile of paddy a sort of pulpit is erected from which the bonzes will recite their prayers.

On the morning of the feast day, the master of the house slaughte [262] an ox from which is made the traditional lap, a dish consisting of raw meat and chopped up peppers mixed with various chopped up green vegetables the whole held together with a soup of pa dek. In the evening a court of love is held and the mo lam (professional singers) are also invited. At the end of this first night, the bonzes climb into the pulpit before daybreak to read the legend of Nang Kho Sop. 527 773

"In the olden days a grain of rice was as big as a gourd. It was cut down with an axe. Then Nang Kho Sop (the soul of rice) became angry at this barbarous treatment and flew away. Since then this feast has been celebrated so that the soul will return."

The reading closes as day breaks, and offerings are made to the bonzes. At the close of the prayer, each one of the faithful, before rising, sprinkles a few drops of water on the ground so that Nang Thorani may bear witness to their alms and so that the goddess may not forget to count it among the merits he has acquired for his future lives.

[69] The owner takes a basket filled with boiled chicken, alcohol, sweet potatoes, and all kinds of tuberous roots. He goes by himself into his rice field and walks over it in every direction, at the same time calling the soul of rice to thank it for having made his fields bear fruit and to beg it to continue being equally generous to him in future years. He offers it all the food in the basket saying: Soul of Rice, here are tuberous roots for thee, here are buds of cabbage palm, and good alcohol made from thy grain. Soul of Rice, descend on us and preside over the feast I am giving in thy honor! 243 527

527 He then places his basket at the base of the pile of paddy and
243 the me-tao come and welcome the rice whose soul the owner of the rice is supposed to have brought back.

The master of the house then brings a straw mannequin personifying rice. Immediately the old women make a bassi before it, and tie white cotton threads to its gilded wrists. They then congratulate the rice on its return and beg it never to leave the granary again.

787 An old man, known for his powers of divination, takes the boiled
527 chicken from the basket, examines minutely its beak and claws, and from signs he discovers in them, reads the fate of the coming harvest.
243 When the prophecy is completed, he slides the entrails of the animal into the stomach of the little straw man as well as all the food from the basket.

527 The Rice figure thus adorned and restored is raised to the top of
243 the pile of paddy whence it will preside over the remainder of the feast.

Before the end of the festival, the wagons are brought out. When they are loaded with the Rice figure enthroned on the first wagon, the paddy is brought into the granaries. When the final load is under shelter, the owner places on its summit the mannequin which, still personifying the soul of Rice [70] will watch over the granary, keep away fire and lightning, and "see that the pile will never diminish or become level with the floor, however many baskets are filled from it."

The master of the harvest is careful to remove a sufficient supply of paddy to last a few weeks, then closes the granary and decorates the door with branches of khoun (to bring luck) and of som seune (gaiety). These will keep luck and gaiety in the house. Hereafter, under no pretext whatever, may the door of the granary be opened before the "third day of the third month," because then "the frog has no mouth and the dragon no anus," and consequently no voracious animal will dare come and devour the harvest.

The Feast of the Khao Chi

527 According to S. Karpelès this ceremony takes place once a year
792 in every quarter of Luang Prabang. It consists of going to the neighborhood of the capital with the bonzes of the pagoda of the designated quarter. A large procession leaves the town, headed for a plateau at the entrance to the forest. While the women are busy with the cooking, the men settle the venerable old men on rugs. The young men and novices cut down branches, clean off the bark leaving a plume of

527 792

leafage, and arrange them in bundles. In the evening everyone returns in a procession to the town, and the wood which has been gathered is put out to dry in the courtyard of the pagoda. A month later, the wood is ready to burn, and another feast takes place at the pagoda. The day before all the women assemble to prepare the offerings of food for the bonzes. They take the wood cut the previous month to cook the ball of rice as big as one's fist on which oil and the contents of an egg are poured so as to form a light surrounding crust. The old people take advantage of this wood- [71] cutting and of its burning to hear additional sermons. The Hit Sip Song Khong Sip Si tell a legend of the origin of this feast, which takes place in memory of an old woman who met a bonze while going to gather wood in the forest. She offered him a ball of rice on which lay an egg. After having done this charitable deed, she was bitten by a snake and died. Since that day the Khao Chi is celebrated.

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[72] ANNUAL RITES OF THE FISHING OF THE PA BEUK

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Every five years the fishing of the pa beuk takes place in five different places. This fish, belonging to the Siluridae family, has a long smooth silvery-white body, without any scales and may attain a weight of 200 kilograms. The five places are Ang (about 25 kilometers upstream from Vientiane) from the 13th to the 15th day of the crescent moon of the 3rd Laotian month, between January and February; at Luang Prabang (in the middle of the river opposite the town) from the 6th to the 7th Laotian months between May and June; at Nong Khieu (about 22 kilometers upstream from Paklay) on the 15th day of the crescent moon of the 3rd Laotian month (February); at Nong Theo (about 30 kilometers upstream from Paklay) between the 4th and 5th Laotian months, without any fixed date; at Ban Seo (about 27 kilometers upstream from Houei Sai) from the 6th to the 7th Laotian month, between May and June.

In the section of the river at Vientiane, as early as the 9th day of the crescent moon, the Chao Muong of the province or his representative leaves the capital to organize the festival. He goes by small stages in a dugout as far as Ang, a sort of wide cove or creek favorable to pa beuk fishing. First the Chao Muong and his retinue stop at Ban Si Khay, "village of the lower orders" ["village de la crasse" may have the above meaning or it may mean "village of filth"--Translator] where lives the village genie who has a wide reputation, and who is continually worshipped by the sorcerers living to the north of the

226 village. At the foot of the tree which is supposed to contain the
[182] dwelling of the genie, there is an altar about two meters high. Here,
the Chao Muong, surrounded by all the fishermen, places five roasted
527 chickens, two bottles of [73] rice alcohol, six coconuts, some betel
leaves, some areca nuts, some cakes, some small sticks of incense,
some beeswax candles. These he offers to the genie, asking him to
intervene in his favor so that the fishing this year be fruitful.

787 The genie is addressed by the intermediary of one of the village
527 sorceresses. As soon as she is "possessed" by the genie, she goes into
226 a trance. She is then unconscious of what is happening around her
and the genie answers through her mouth to the questions asked of her
by the fishermen. Invariably the genie's answer is the same: the
catch will be fruitful if traditions peculiar to the fishing of the pa beuk
are followed. The possessed woman, surrounded by a circle of fisher-
men, is at first standing up and is holding a cup in which are flowers,
[292] small sticks of incense, and ten beeswax candles. Her hands begin to
tremble when the genie enters into her; she then sets the cup down at
her feet, and, on top of her own clothes, puts on those of the fishermen
who present her with them on a tray for the sacrifice: an ordinary
sin, a cotton shirt dyed red, a belt and a turban also of cotton dyed
red to which are added a metallic piaster, and two yards [brasse]
of white cotton cloth for her personal use. After turning all around,
she squats down, her bust moving in a gyrating motion, and from
this moment she speaks in the name of the genie.

On the 10th day of the crescent moon the Chao Muong and the
preachers arrive at Kao Lieu, "the nine windings" of the Mekong,
where there is a very famous genie who is much more powerful than
that of Ban Si Khay. Forming a large procession, they fetch the
village sorceress with parasols, lances, swords and gongs. Piled high
on an offering tray are nine bars of silver, two kilograms of beeswax,
ten candles, four coconuts, some betel leaves, some areca nuts,
[74] a metal piaster, two yards [brasse] of white cloth, a raw hen's
egg, a bottle of rice alcohol. The procession returns with the sorcer-
ess to the front of the altars which are regular houses, and everyone
settles down in them. The entrance is to the west, that is, opposite
[78] the town. The offerings for the genie are four times greater than at
Ban Si Khay as each altar receives nine roast chickens, nine bars of
silver, four coconuts, some areca, some betel, candles, small
sticks of incense. In addition, every three years, a buffalo is sacri-
ficed, and in the years between, a pig. There are the same questions
and the same answers as at Ban Si Khay.

173: Deydier--48 H, E-3 (no date) 1952 AM1 Indochina
(ca. 1940) Laotians AM8

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In the night of the 11th to 12th day of the crescent moon, the stop is at Hat Hin Siou where some offerings are made to the local genie: two coconuts, two chickens, etc., with the request that he be favorable to the fishing. There are two more stops before arriving at Ang which must be reached on the 12th day of the crescent moon, at eight o'clock in the morning. In the evening all the fishermen go to the village to question the sorceress. There is no procession, but the same gifts as at Ban Si Khay; same questions, same answers. On the 13th day, at seven in the morning, they go to the altar of the genie with offerings to invite him to come and live in the temporary shelter which has been erected on the sandbank at Ang, north of the village, and to beg him to favor the fishing. The whole procession then goes toward the temporary altar and deposits its offerings.

On the 13th day of the crescent moon, the fishing starts at the precise moment when the moon disappears behind the mountain, that is at about four o'clock in the morning.

The gong is struck and immediately the 384 fishing dugouts go into the harbor. Each dugout is decorated with leafy branches, with seven untwisted cotton threads and with a bottle of rice alcohol, and is occupied by two fishermen. They throw a net measuring three meters in width and six meters in length which sinks down to a depth of [75] 35 brasses [70 meters] by means of lead sinkers. The first fish caught is offered to the genie. It is laid gently on its side, its head turned towards the rising sun, its tail lifted towards the setting sun. Some flowers are laid on its cheek and sprinkled with alcohol, while the master of ceremonies says: "The moment of celebrating the feast of Ang, which is your feast, has arrived. The ritual offerings have been made to you. To bring this feast to a happy close we beg you to give the fishermen pa beuk in great quantities."

The fish is then killed with a pointed bamboo which is sunk between the fish's eyes. It is then divided in two. The prepared liver is offered to the genie after it has been fixed in various ways according to ritual recipes, while candles and small sticks of incense decorate the nine offering trays each of which bears the bowl of food.